

THE NIGHTCAP

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AN INTERPRETATION OF THE TWELVE STEPS

...By Nedra M.

4. Made a Searching and Fearless Moral Inventory of Ourselves.

There exists in A. A. a divergence of opinion concerning the respective merits of the written, as against the mental or oral, inventory; and like the War between the States, the arguments end up in an impasse. Much can be said pro and con; however, it is this writer's opinion that the written inventory serves the best purpose.

In the first place, a written inventory requires some time and effort and would, therefore, make the taker more cognizant of his shortcomings; more aware of the need to change. In making a written inventory, the individual has to be more analytical, to probe deeper and come to greater self-understanding in order to get himself into proper focus or perspective. In addition to this, the effort and time spent in making a written inventory naturally creates a deeper impression on the mind and is not so easily forgotten.

Secondly, a written inventory is at hand for purposes of review; to gauge one's progress and to compare with later inventories. In reality, the Fourth Step, or Inventory Step as it is often referred to, combined with the Tenth Step, is the foundation or basic working principle of the A.A. program of rehabilitation. Comparing it to a business, the Inventory is made and thereafter is kept in perpetuity.

The Inventory Step is at the same time an ACTION step. It is something positive and definite the alcoholic can do. Prior to making an inventory, he

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WHEN LIFE BECOMES TEMPORARILY UNINTERESTING ... By the Rev. John T. DeForest, Jr.

The following was borrowed from "St. Mark's Messenger," official weekly of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, of which "Jack" as he is lovingly known throughout local AA circles, is Assistant Rector:

There are many in our world who feel that life holds little interest for them. No doubt, they are often bored with themselves and wonder if they love even God.

If we are in this frame of mind we might well try a little experiment with our own thoughts. Quietly recall several experiences: Our club, our sports, our church. As we consider these relationships we realize that interest we once had is lost.

The club will pile work on us; the golf course or bridge will bring defeat; the Church has hypocrites. This attitude in every relationship questions us and not the particular organization, club or church.

We may well examine ourselves. The organization and sport still have their interests and thrills. The Church "has life more abundantly." Our state of mind is where the defect lies. We are discoloring every image that enters our thoughts.

We are not presuming to take your inventory. We suggest, however, that you take your own, honestly and fairly. Whatever you find in assets and liabilities bring prayerfully to God. Ask the question of the disciples: "Lord, what will Thou have me to do?"

In answering this call to action, I know you will have started a spiritual awakening.

has to make a self analysis. Usually he needs the help and guidance of another individual with whom he can discuss his defects. He has to learn that moral, as referred to in the inventory step, does not mean immorality, since some individuals quibble over the interpretation of the word moral, as referring to "immoral conduct." Such is not the case. In this instance it refers to character defects, social maladjustments and personality quirks. Most alcoholics fall into two broad categories -- extrovert and introvert; this in no wise classifies them as being of a definite pattern or type, since personality quirks peculiar to both categories are noticeably dominant in both classifications. In simple words, certain definite defects of character are fairly common in both the extrovert and introvert types, such as: resentment, immaturity, selfishness, impatience, intolerance, self-pity, envy, dishonesty, suspiciousness, egotism and aggressiveness. Obscured in the maze of these major defects of character are defects of a more minor nature, such as super-sensitiveness, indecision, procrastination, lack of confidence, fears and anxieties and rebelliousness, which cause the alcoholic trouble. Directly, they are responsible for his inability to sober up, or remain so. In a state of sobriety he is unable or unwilling to face these things.

Continuing on the premise that one has all, or most, of the defects mentioned, it is easy to understand why the alcoholic wants to "run - not walk" to the nearest exit to seek escape, once he sobers up and sees himself. The immensity of the task he must accomplish if he is to stay sober simply overwhelms him. It is too big, and too difficult for accomplishment.

If the new member has been thoroughly indoctrinated in the previous steps, he will encounter less difficulty at this point. He should remember first that he cannot take even ONE drink, lest his life become unmanageable. He should bear in mind that by relying on his God he will receive help sufficient for his needs, and he should keep in mind constantly that he has only 24 hours in which to work at this new way of life.

Very often the new member feels, or is
(Continued, Column 2, above)

advised, he should begin his inventory immediately upon his entry into A.A. This matter is also open to controversy. It is this writer's opinion that a reasonable length of time would not be amiss in postponing the inventory (say from 3 to 6 months), IF - and I say this reservedly - the taker spends this time in study, self-analysis, reading and discussion with other members. He will then have acclimated himself to his task -- attuned himself with the Higher Power, and be in a better position to proceed.

In practically all cases the question arises: "How does one go about making an Inventory?" -- that is, the actual mechanics of it. It might read something like this:

LIABILITIES

ASSETS

Resentment

Generosity

Intolerance

Gregariousness

Impatience

Industriousness

Over-Aggressiveness

Dishonesty

This is only a suggestion, and by no means a model.

The Inventory need not, and should not, encompass past wrongs inflicted on other individuals. It need not be a listing or a diary of misdeeds, errors and failures. The Fifth Step whereby we make our amends deals with this aspect of our recovery. The Inventory Step is to highlight our shortcomings, enable us to "see ourselves as other people see us." As previously stated, it is the basis or foundation from which we work to eliminate defects that cause us most of our trouble. Sobriety alone is not enough.

Growth in the AA program could well be measured by frustration rather than satisfaction. Rigid, honest, self-examination serves in most cases to uncover the root of our dissatisfaction, and the cause of our emotional upheavals. We might term these phases, spurt - plateau - and dip. Sobriety in itself is a big spurt in the right direction. Once attained and held for a period of time, we are ready to proceed. Our plateau is only as big as we ourselves are. We circumscribe its

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(Inventory - Concluded)

area by our growth. Although a smooth level plateau would be preferable and make for much better traveling, we should expect some rough uneven places. The bumps, far from tripping us up and causing us to stumble, should make us stronger. In other words, our experiences and the manner in which we handle each situation should solidify our position. The alcoholic who goes into a dip should make every effort to re-establish himself on to firmer footing. If he falls off, he should certainly do a re-examination to ascertain the reason for his fall. Valuable experience is gained from expended effort which falls far short of success, and the right attitude can turn a liability into an asset.

(There will be more on STEP 4 in the May Issue.)

COME ON, GIRLS!

Through the years, I have listened to a succession of male speakers announce to all and sundry that alcoholism as a disease is no respecter of persons. They have informed me, in varying degrees of eloquence, that alcohol is cunning, baffling and powerful; and that anyone of any race, color, creed or sex can become possessed of this two-fold malady. They've asked me to believe that action is the magic word of our divinely inspired program. They have also assured me that participation in group activity is vitally important. Then, after the applause has subsided, the leader, more often than not a man, blandly announces "and we also have our lady alcoholics."

This automatically relegates us to a place in the shade. We feel like squirming microbes viewed through a lens of strained tolerance. Knowing of the remarkable growth of Alcoholics Anonymous, one becomes a bit dismayed that more women are not to be found on the steering committees or as leaders of our meetings. Happily, the groups where one finds such oversights are becoming fewer in number as time goes on. Often have I watched these steering committees driving their ox-carts hither and yon looking for a male to fill an office when

(Concluded, Column 2 above)

BIRTHDAYS FOR MAY - 1954:

- 2 years: W. E. "Bill" B., Beverly B., Klyda P.
- 3 years: Ed. G. N., Vera M.
- 5 years: Sonny F., Lt. Charles A. H., Joshua L., Claude L. "Dan" M., Emil M. O.
- 7 years: Lorena A., Jim E.
- 8 years: Warren C., Ralph N.

BIRTHDAYS FOR JUNE - 1954:

- 2 years: Gerry G. C.
- 3 years: Mike D., Dr. Frank J. DeH.
- 4 years: Bill D., Mrs. Ida E., George P.K. Ova H. W.
- 6 years: Jack D., Arthur E. D.
- 7 years: Bob B., Jim E., Bruce N. Dorothy A. H.
- 8 years: Cal F.

(Come On, Girls! - Concluded)

within their own membership there is most likely a very capable "lady alcoholic" yearning for the therapy so strongly stressed in our book. The writer will welcome the day when she can be proven wrong about this circumstance, and she wishes to remind the gals action is the magic word, so let's do something about taking our place in AA.

- Eye-Opener, Long Beach, Calif.

Editor's Note: The foregoing is probably true in Long Beach, but in San Antonio we may point with pride to the Downtown Group "institution" - Dorothy H. who has been chairman of "something or other" almost as long as we can remember.

Then there's Mary Lysle and Ellamarie McB. who constitute the remainder of the board of governors of the group. Nedra M. is secretary-treasurer of the Sahara Club. Kate R. is boss over at 612 Avenue E, where Marion W. assists on the Board. Someone sent us the clipping in a San Antonio-postmarked envelope anonymously, and we naturally presume it was a "girl."

Well, ladies, here's your answer. We couldn't get along without you!

"ME.....I" ?

I had never seen the man before, yet he had been around a very long while. He sat in the very last chair, apart somehow from his surroundings. The meeting was under way when he slipped quietly into that remote seat, and I was attracted by the darting look of utter amazement that crossed the face of our chairman for the evening. Joe was chairman that night, a man who had been in AA for a great many years, and who was a fixture at every weekly meeting, unknowingly a tower of strength to many who drew from his calm words and straight thinking, faith and comfort and hope.

The stranger was carelessly dressed, his face was flushed and beaded with sweat, and there was a look of almost childish bewilderment in his shadowed eyes; there was fear theretoo, and doubt.

My heart reached out to this stranger, for I knew what he was going through, and I was silently praying, "Please God, let someone say something to ease this man's suffering." As the members spoke in turn I suddenly knew that my prayer was heeded and I could almost feel the comforting presence that invaded the room.

It was the stranger's turn; the chairman called him by name. Tremblingly, he rose from the chair and pushed it in front of him for support; jewels of water cascaded from his chin, his knuckles gleamed whitely on top of the chair as he steadied himself. He spoke hoarsely and haltingly at first, and then he seemed to relax; the fear and bewilderment seemed to drop away and the words were straight from an humble heart. Ten years, eleven, no trouble, but withdrawing, further and further from AA, from a Power Greater than himself -- somehow the old horrors had faded, he had really begun to believe that HE was ordering his own life -- HE didn't need meetings. And he was bored with AA, bored with the bums and the phonies; HE had all the answers and the most horrible belief that had obsessed him was when he began to believe, after all those years, that HE could safely drink again. He was one of the more fortunate, though -- his home gone, money gone, family gone, self respect; even his friends were scarce, for he had deserted them when he withdrew from AA. Yes, he was really one of the fortunate, for out of the past, an old member of AA who had known him in the old days, had come to him when once again he was on the bottom, and had brought to life again that little spark of hope that, even now, all is not lost -- "Come back, friend". For if you can't come any time to AA, where ELSE can you go, and from the depths of his desperation he had realized that he must return or he would surely die -- he KNEW now that it was not himself who had given him the happy years of sobriety. . . . And so began another life, because God saw fit to give him another chance. There are some who have had their last chance; pray God you never have to find out.

The stranger sat down slowly. There was a deep silence, and suddenly the stranger was no longer a stranger; he could be any one of us, or all of us. "Lest we forget." The thought burned like fire. And then we were saying "THY WILL BE DONE ... AMEN." Leaving the hall a little later, I knew I had witnessed a MIRACLE.

- High & Dry

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Bum: "Say, Buddy, could you let me have a dime for a cup of coffee?"

Wise Guy: "A dime? You can get coffee for a nickel."

Bum: "I know it, but I got a date."

"Not a day passes but what my wife shows her incompatability."

"Tut, tut. Ain't it a crime the way women dress!"

* * *

TEMPTATION

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation"
- James 1:12

Temptation is ever present with all of us. What tempts one may not tempt another. Yet no man liveth that has no temptations.

Perhaps, if we understood more just what temptation is and how insidious it can be, we would learn better how to escape it.

When we are tempted we are drawn away of our own lusts and enticed. Temptation is not a sin but, when we give in to our temptation, we sin. Jesus was tempted, yet He was without sin. It is not possible for us to live a sinless life, but we should ever strive for perfection.

Many of us will soon be going out into the world we knew before we became habitues of Narco. Will we be able to evade the many temptations to which we yielded before coming here? We are the only ones that can answer this question.

AA has done, and is still doing, its part to instill in us the new way of life. If we honestly follow its precepts, we will be able to shun the things that were once our greatest problems "RESIST TEMPTATION."

- "The Key"

LET'S WATCH OURSELVES. Any man can spoil himself for himself. He can allow himself to grow so sensitive that he lives in constant pain. He can nurse his grudges until they are an intolerable burden. He can think himself insulted until he is apt to be. He can believe that the world is against him until it is. He can imagine troubles until they are real. He can hold so many under suspicion that no one believes in him. He can insult his friends until they are no longer friends. He can think himself so important that no one else does. He can become so wrapped up in himself that he becomes very small. He can have such a good opinion of himself that no one else enjoys his friendship. In fact, he becomes so unhappy with himself that he probably goes out to get a drink to forget himself.

HINTS FOR CREATIVE LIVING

When you know what you must do, do it. Don't wait for tomorrow.

If tomorrow is a day toward which we reach eagerly, all is well with us. If tomorrow, however, is only an escape from today, it is not well with us. Most of us know what we ought to do. We have a sense of duty and responsibility. We have an equal sense of rightness. Our difficulty is not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of resoluteness. We know what we ought to do, but we lack the inner strength to do it. To do what we know we ought to do demands decisiveness, effort, and the readiness to translate thought into action. That is precisely where our trouble lies. We do not want to be decisive -- not now. We do not want to make the effort -- now. We are not saying that we will never make the effort. We deceive ourselves by saying that we will make it -- tomorrow. So we defer, so we rationalize, so we give ourselves a score of good reasons why we should do it tomorrow. But tomorrow these reasons seem equally good, and with a sigh of relief we realize that there is another tomorrow. The penalty for such a delay is terrific. It weakens our power to decide. It corrodes our functions of decisiveness. It creates in us imaginary virtues. The mere thought of doing what we ought to do will bring us a glow of satisfaction as though we really had done it. That is fatal. On the other hand, there is infinite reward in crowning intention with action. WHATEVER WE MUST DO, LET US DO IT NOW. It will be wiser to do it today, than tomorrow. Let the deed follow the thought; let the action follow the resolve. In that pattern lies strength. From that strength comes Peace of Mind.

- Dr. Arnold Lowe

A narrow mind and a wide mouth usually go together.

No man has a right to do as he pleases except when he pleases to do right.

- Cedar Rapids Newsletter.

